THE MANITOBA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
LA COMMISSION DES DROITS DE LA PERSONNE DU MANITOBA

connections

Equality of Opportunity and Freedom from Discrimination

A summer of achievements; a winter of guidance

Torch of Dignity Relay 2016

Rain did not dampen the spirits of the more than 90 torch bearers travelling from Thunderbird House to Assiniboine Park in Winnipeg on July 23. The torch is a symbol of commitment to work together to promote human rights.

This is the first time a Canadian city hosted an event like this.

The relay culminated with Senator Murray Sinclair speaking to those who gathered in Assiniboine Park.

The Manitoba Human Rights Commission was among the runners participating. Mediator Paul Kruse volunteered (second from right).

"Winnipeg has the opportunity both as a city, and as a population of people, to embrace the idea of human rights," he said.

"It certainly brings to the public attention the importance of human rights and the fact that we shouldn't take human rights for granted and that we can become complacent about human rights if we are not careful."

continued on page 2

The Rights Connection

By Isha Khan

Stories of discrimination and prejudice have been all over the news the last few months. Leading up to the U.S. Presidential election and because of the various other tragic events occurring around the world, it often feels as though there is no hope for peace and equality.

As Canadians, we look at the events going on beyond our borders with empathy but also with a sense of reassurance that in Canada we are protected by the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms, The Human Rights Code* and other similar human rights laws. Although our political landscape is thankfully not as charged as that of our neighbours to the south, Canadians continue to be subjected to prejudice and stereotyping based on race, disability, sex, sexual orientation and other characteristics protected by our human rights laws.

Unfortunately, the Commission's statistics only capture those complaints that were made by people who know about *The Human Rights Code*. As part of our education mandate, the Commission has increased efforts to raise awareness about *The Code*, what it means and how it can help. This will be done not only by being reactive, but proactive.

The Commission will also continue to build relationships and provide examples stemming from discriminatory situations brought to our attention of how to ensure equality in our workplaces, public services and housing. In this way, we feel like we can be part of the conversation around race relations and discrimination in our own context.

The Manitoba Human Rights Commission joined the many rights groups from around Winnipeg in the Torch of Dignity event. The relay was hosted by Manitobans for Human Rights Inc.

According to Valerie Thompson, President, Manitobans for Human Rights Inc., "We work towards the goal of having Winnipeg designated as a Human Rights City..."

Manitobans for Human Rights is a non-profit, non-partisan Association that has two goals: to promote Human Rights learning throughout the Province of Manitoba and to the gradual development of a community based on equality and non- discrimination.

Steinbach Pride

Question: What do you do when you expect 200 people and thousands show up?

Answer: You celebrate.

Despite setbacks, which, at times were controversial, Steinbach's inaugural Pride March was an unequivocal success. On Saturday July 9, much of the community of about 13,500 welcomed people from across Manitoba and as far away as Florida.

At first organizers predicted about 200 people would be attending. Just before the march that number was revised to 1,000. By the time the march was underway, an estimated 2500 people flowed into Steinbach.

Congratulations!

Accepting Guidance

Race based discrimination is an issue in Canada and Manitoba. Sometimes it is an overtly racist comment in the workplace. Other times it is more subtle like poor customer service given to a particular ethnic or ancestral group. Whether overt or subtle, these are forms of discrimination that are prohibited by *The Human Rights Code*.

(Left to Right ; Diane Dwarka (MHRC Commissioner), Elder Mae Louise Campbell, Elder Norman Meade, Elder Paul Guimond, Loretta Ross (MHRC Commissioner).

In March 2015, the Commission announced its multi-year consultation project, "Making Connections" to address discrimination based on race. The first phase is focusing on discrimination faced by Indigenous peoples in Manitoba and is intended to identify systemic barriers. Next is how the Commission might engage in the work of reconciliation among Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Manitoba.

The Commission was pleased and honoured to meet with a Council of Elders this month who will help shape the consultation process. The Elders have provided invaluable guidance, highlighting the importance of relationships and making connections as ways to engage in public consultations and raise awareness about the Commission.

According to Elder Norman Meade, "it is of utmost importance that government agencies work together with Elders of the Indigenous community to educate. We see the Making Connections project as an effective method in this process."

Register now

To understand more about human rights, harassment and reasonable accommodation in the workplace consider taking part, in either one or four workshops over two days. These sessions are offered in both Winnipeg and Brandon and you can register online at http://www.manitobahumanrights.ca/workshops.html.

Another effective way to learn more about human rights in the workplace is for our staff to visit you. As well, the Commission will be in Northern Manitoba in 2017. If you would like an on-site seminar please get in touch with us early. Planning is now underway. Please contact us at hrc@gov.mb.ca